Gates of City and How Master Gatemen Serve Passing Throng

Egan of the Pennsylvania Terminal Knows All the Celebrities and Likes Them, but Always Finds Time to Aid the Humble Traveller

THE men who direct the great granite structures that we call railway stations, the true gates of the city, though one of the paradoxes wrought by modern engineering has placed them at its centre instead of on its circumference, are forced to deal with human nature in an abnormal phase. Commonplace as a railway journey seems to most of us, it is a fact that there is something about it that jars men and women from their accustomed ways of thought and action. A thousand extraordinary incidents take place every day that would be impossible under any other environment than the hum and bustle set up by the modern machinery of transportation, and the personalities, methods and experiences of the men who deal as a part of their routine existence with these incidents, sometimes trivial, sometimes grave, are of more than passing interest. They are witnesses of a drama upon which the curtain is never rung down, a pageant of movement which goes on through every hour of every day of the year.

The men who are responsible for the quarter of a million travellers passing daily through the gates of New York are picked from the thousands of employees of a dozen great railway systems. They have served a long apprenticeship in the service of the public, they are men trained to action rather than speech and more inclined to give credit for their achievements to their subordinates than to themselves, but if you are fortunate enough to know any of them you may learn not only a thousand anecdotes of the strange vicissitudes which befall travellers but some deeper lesson of faithful, intelligent service as well.

William H. Egan, who has ruled the Pennsylvania Terminal, at Seventh avenue and Thirty-second street, since it was opened in 1910, is just as big as his job. Well over six feet, built in proportion, sharp eyed and clear skinned, his mere physical attributes would make him a marked man in any company. Add to his inches and strength the swiftness of decision and acuteness of perception that come from long experience and the genuine heartiness of a man who likes his work and who never allows it to worry him and you have Egan—a typical American executive. He is as far removed as possible from the role of petty martinet so often played by the French chef de gare or the English station master and sometimes, sad to say, attempted by the minor officials of American railroads.

"I like to deal with the public," Egan says, and perhaps that is the real secret of his success. He is the sort of man who would have been called "Bill" anyway, even if his parents hadn't taken the precaution to christen him William. There may be a man or woman in New York who has more friends and acquaintances than the big station master at the Pennsylvania Terminal, but if so he or she is unknown to fame.

Egan Knows Them All.

Wall street and Broadway, Fifth avenue and The Bronx, Egan knows them all. Bankers and actresses, society women and just plain folks from every section of this big city are on the list of his friends. Presidents Roosevelt, Taft and Wilson have each in turn come under the big station master's protection, sometimes on their official journeys when they entered the big terminal in a special train and left it with a military escort and sometimes on quiet little shopping trips when they dispensed with most of the ceremonious precautions that surround the nation's Chief Executive. In either case, and no matter what precautions the city police force and the secret service may have taken, the President is under the care of Station Master Egan as long as he remains in the terminal building, and whatever arrangements are made Egan is a party to the conference which arranges them.

Visiting notables from the lands across the sea often come under Egan's care too. When the Duke of Connaught visited this country he exhibited great interest in the big terminal and the electrified division of the Pennsylvania and made a special trip between Manhattan Transfer and New York in one of the electric motors, and an inspection of the entire structure. And of course it was the station master who conducted the party and answered the many questions of his Highness. One of the things that caught the royal traveller's eye was the crowds of commuters rushing to catch Long Island trains in the late afternoon. The word "commuter" was strange to the Duke's vocabulary and he asked Egan for an explanation.

"Commuters," Egan explained, "are people who are too poor to live in New York."

"Really?" the Duke answered, and doubtless stored this interesting bit of information away as another example of the extraordinary way in which Americans do things.

Lord Decies, whose marriage to Vivian Gould a few years ago was an event of more than passing interest on two continents, began his honeymoon with a trip to Palm Beach. A private car was placed at his disposal and the most elaborate precautions were taken by the station master at the Pennsylvania Terminal to keep the curious away until the Florida express pulled out. And the bride and bridegroom were added to the list of Egan's friends when they entered their car under his escort without a dozen people in the terminal knowing that the English nobleman and the American heiress whose pictures had filled the papers for weeks had just passed within a few feet of them.

The slowness of the public to recognize well known people, by the way, is about the only kink in the mind of the traveller that Egan doesn't understand. He has such an enormous personal acquaintance himself and such an extraordinary memory for names and faces that he finds it hard to realize that the average public character is quite safe from recognition in a crowded terminal. Some of the most amusing experiences he relates are based on this fact.

Not many weeks ago Egan was chatting with two acquaintances waiting for a train when he spied ex-President Taft walking across the concourse toward the gates. Excusing himself, the station master greeted Mr. Taft and escorted him to his train. When he returned one of the men said: "Who was that big fellow, Bill?" And upon inquiry Egan discovered that both men had voted for Taft in 1908 and again in 1912.

A Roosevelt Story.

Even President Roosevelt whose face and figure might be supposed to be familiar to the average American, has often passed through the terminal on his way to Oyster Bay without recognition. Egan tells of the ex-President's wandering about the building one afternoon when he spent more than half an hour mingling with the crowds without recognition.

Roosevelt entered the station on foot from Seventh avenue. As he turned in from the street his attention was arrested by a knot of people who were reading the inscription on the bronze tablets erected by the directors to commemorate the executives, engineers and contractors who had a part in the construction of the terminal and tunnels. The Colonel adjusted his glasses and read the long list through. Then he walked down the arcade which leads to the main waiting room and ticket offices. The lighted window of a book shop caught his eye and he stopped a moment to examine the titles displayed. A recent publication excited his interest and he entered, asked for a copy and thrust it into his overcoat pocket without waiting for the salesman to wrap it. Then he went down the flight of steps which lead to the waiting room. At the bottom he stopped and examined carefully the statue of former President Cassatt of the Pennsylvania, "whose courage, foresight and ability made possible the extension of the Pennsylvania Railroad into New York city," as the inscription upon it reads.

The railroad man had been a member of more than one conference at the White House during Roosevelt's Administration, and the Colonel examined the statue with the eye of a man who has not only known the subject but knows something of art as well. Finally a glance at the clock told him that it was time to move toward the Long Island platforms. At the news stand, however, he stopped a moment to purchase the afternoon papers. He also bought a cake of chocolate, which he bestowed on a little girl who was gazing wistfully at the big pile of sweets, and started to walk toward the gates.

As he reached the barrier he remembered the papers which he laid down while he spoke to the child. He hurried back and picked them up. The clock marked within a minute or two of train time and the Colonel ran across the platform and through the gate just before it slammed shut. He had been in the station for half an hour, Egan says, and not a single traveller had bestowed a second glance on the foremost private citizen of the republic.

President Wilson, too, when he was Governor of New Jersey and a well known public character, having just performed the astounding feat of stepping from a professorial chair at Princeton to the Executive Mansion at Trenton, often visited New York, and the lunch counter in the Pennsylvania terminal was one of his favorite resorts. Almost invariably he perched himself on a stool there, either just after his arrival or while waiting for a Trenton train on his departure. In the score or more occasions when he dined democratically at the counter no one ever seemed to recognize him except the negro attendants, who get to know habitual customers.

Egan's methods of handling his work are as original as his personality. There is a mass of routine matter which passes through his office for signature and record. It would be easy for a man less determined to carry out his own plans to lose himself in the consideration of details, which are apt to grow in seeming importance as an executive's attention is focused upon them.

A Ubiquitous Human.

But those who know Egan know that his office on the little gallery to the right of the train gates is the last place in the world to look for him. Those who are very well acquainted with his habits know of a certain half hour in the morning and another late in the afternoon when he may be found at his desk signing such papers as require personal attention and examining carefully prepared summaries of the day's working details. The rest of the time he is on the train platforms, at the information office, inspecting the various public rooms or making himself agreeable to the patrons of his road. He is as nearly ubiquitous as it is humanly possible to be. Not a day passes but he personally examines every square foot of building and tracks. Scarcely a train pulls out but Egan has passed through the gates or along the platforms.

He has the curious faculty of being able, apparently, to see what is happening in several different directions at once. He can stand in the middle of the big concourse, his entire attention seemingly focused on the conversation of an acquaintance or the inquiry of a traveller, and be acutely and instantly aware of every detail in the hum and bustle all around him.

Not that he is the type of man who is constantly instructing and overruling his subordinates. Far from it. Every man and woman in the organization has his or her appointed duties, scheduled just as the trains are scheduled to arrive and leave at the platforms, and the station master interferes no more with the one than he does with the other. But the gateman or red capped porter who sees the suave way in which his chief handles inquiries and complaints receives a lesson in human nature that he is not slow to forget.

It is his very talent for organization which leaves Bill Egan free to wander about the terminal at will with the knowledge that no matter where he is matters will go on smoothly just the same, and to devote so much of his time to the aspect of his job that appeals most strongly to his nature—that of making the men and women who patronize the Pennsylvania believe that the whole organization of the road has no other thought but the convenience of every individual traveller.

H. E. Jahnke, assistant station master in charge of the office, is one of Egan's assistants, who is largely responsible for his chief's freedom of action. Jahnke handles the paper work and receives the thousand of inquiries and the occasional complaint that comes to the station master's office. Like Egan, he too has a large acquaintance and an infallible memory for names and faces, though he spends very little time away from his desk.

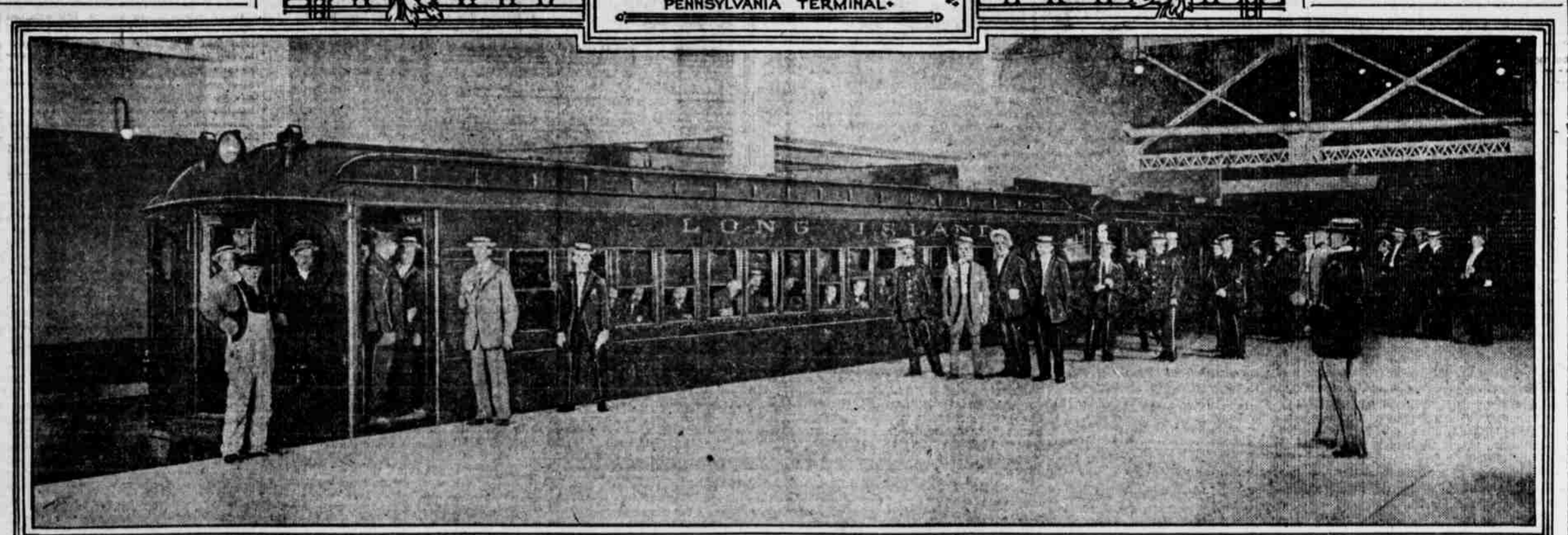
The station master's office, though it is seldom tenanted by that official himself, is an interesting place, for its walls are covered from floor to ceiling with photographs of prominent persons who have acquired more than a passing liking for the genial Bill Egan. Statesmen, high railroad officials, generals and admirals, foreign notables are among the portraits which hang there, together with a dozen or so people not so well known to the great world, but who have fallen under the spell of Egan's personality just as the celebrities have. There is a war souvenir, too—a number of views of trainloads of passing doughboys being fed by Red Cross canteen workers. The canteen unit on duty always has a representative in the station master's office and the women in the blue aprons with the little symbol of world wide help on their hats but one buxom lass who had worked her way to the front row threw her arms about the big station master's neck and imprinted a fervid smack on his astonished countenance. According to Egan's friends, the really funny part of the story is that no one has ever got him to admit that he didn't like the experience.

Egan has another story about a kiss, too. Like the $38,000 osculation it was a reward for restoration of a large sum of money, but it was one of the station attendents and not Egan himself who received it. One morning, a short while before the Pennsylvania Limited was due to leave at 11:04, a women's handbag was brought to the office by an attendant, who had found it on the floor. Not many minutes later a handsome and well gowned women rushed frantically into the room with an inquiry for such an article. She was asked to describe the bag and its contents and to the astonishment of every one in the room her enumeration began, "one hundred $1,000 bills." She went on to describe jewelry, which she said was valued at much more. The station master opened the bag, counted out the $1,000 bills, examined some of the jewelry and restored the bag to its owner.

"Who found it?" the woman asked. Egan pointed to the waiting attendant. The women hesitated a moment. "Why, then—," she paused a moment, suddenly gave the attendant the heartiest of kisses, and ran out of the room and down the steps to her train. And incidentally, that was all the reward anybody connected with the station ever received.

Another of Egan's stories is about the wedding party that nearly caused a serious derangement of the terminal schedule. The wedding had been a hilarious affair at an uptown hotel, and of course the destination of the couple leaked out. The guests arrived at the station in hot pursuit of the bride and bridegroom loaded with old shoes and bags of rice. There were close to 150 of them, Egan declares, and they swept the gateman aside and were down on the train platform before the station employees could muster force enough to stop them. And then the casualties began. The train conductor, standing watch in hand, was knocked senseless by a hard thrown shoe. A brakeman received a similar missle in the pit of the stomach and he dropped to the floor, speechless with anguish. Every passenger on the platform was deluged with rice. Finally the station master appeared with a force of gatemen, order was restored, the conductor and brakeman were resuscitated, and the train left only a couple of minutes late.

STATIONMASTER BILL EGAN ESCORTING A PRESIDENT THROUGH the PENNSYLVANIA TERMINAL



JUST AS A TRAIN IS ABOUT TO LEAVE ONE of the BIG TERMINALS

Cramer at the Grand Central Follows a Different but None the Less Successful System—Grave and Gay Sides of the Work

have learned to interpret the mysterious symbols on the automatic writing machine which announces the placing of arriving and departing trains as well as any of the staff, and have become almost a part of the station crew.

Not that Egan is a professional lion hunter. He likes the acquaintance of famous men—he frankly admits it—because men who have accomplished something in the world generally have something interesting to tell the sort of men who can draw them out. Besides it is only human nature to be a little vain of the acquaintance of men and women whose names and personalities are known and discussed wherever newspapers are read. But there is another class of the travelling public for whom Egan has a special weakness. The blind, the aged, and women with small children get all the consideration possible from everybody on the terminal and if they come into the station master's range of vision he takes care that they get his personal assistance.

A former railroad president, now a prominent official of the Federal Administration, tells of Egan breaking off a conversation to help and direct an immigrant and her children, whom he sent toward their train with a porter to carry the shapeless bundles and a word of encouragement for the strangers bewildered with the sights and sounds of a new land. Egan would never tell that story himself—not because he is overmodest but because it was to him only an incident in the day's work, forgotten as soon as it was done.

The $38,000 Kiss.

The stories that he does tell are mostly of the amusing incidents that happen almost daily. One of them is the story of the $38,000 kiss. That incident has to do with an immigrant too, or rather with a band of them who carelessly left a flour sack containing their joint savings on a waiting room bench. The bag was promptly picked up by an attendant and turned in to the station master's office to await a claimant. It was not long before the claimant appeared—thirty or forty of them frantic with grief and apprehension at the loss of their life's savings. Identification was easy and Egan turned the bag over to the leader of the band with a word of warning to be more careful in the future. A deluge of thanks in the dialect of southern Italy succeeded the lamentations and attendants tried to lead the jubilant men and women toward their train. Some turned to go,

Up at Grand Central Terminal, which might be called the northern gate of the city as the Pennsylvania Station is the southern gate, William A. Cramer, stationmaster, is the man who cares for the traveller making his preparations to leave or hastening to his ultimate destination after arrival. The organization of the Grand Central differs in some respects from that of the Pennsylvania Station. The terminal itself is a separate corporate entity from the lines which make use of it and besides operating facilities for the New Haven and New York Central lines the company is one of the largest owners of profitable real estate in the city. Miles Bronson is general superintendent of the terminal and the electric division and G. H. Wilson is superintendent.

But the man who has put his wife on the train for Toronto and subsequently discovers that he has forgotten to give his spouse her tickets and money rushes to Cramer's office. And so does the man who has just missed the Lake Shore Limited and who insists that he must be in Toledo next morning. Cramer is the bearing point where the corporation comes in contact with the public at Forty-second street, just as Egan is at Thirty-third street.

In manner, appearance and methods he is the complete antithesis of the Pennsylvania official. The two men are living examplars of the proposition that there is no set formula for success. Cramer is retiring, almost shy, with the manner and appearance that one is accustomed to associate with men who deal largely in theories rather than facts. Perhaps the big gold rimmed eyeglasses which he wears at his desk add to his air of being a college professor or rather a successful playwright.

His intercourse with the public is large, of course, but it is confined to the people who come to his office with inquiries and complaints. Cramer seldom appears on the station platforms, and it is safe to say that of the many thousands who use the lines he represents very few know him by sight. There are just as many prominent people in and out of the Grand Central Terminal every day as there are at the Pennsylvania Station. The list of passengers on the Twentieth Century Limited for a year would be nothing less than a "Who's Who in America," but there is only one who insists that the stationmaster himself must escort him to and from his train. That is Andrew Carnegie, who invariably asks for Cramer when he reaches the Grand Central. Most of the personal attention paid to travellers at the Grand Central is left by the stationmaster to his four assistants, each of whom has a coterie of acquaintances and friends among the habitual customers of the New Haven and New York Central.

While Cramer and Egan appear to be in entire contrast as to all outward appearances, yet they have the same essential attitude toward their work. Like Egan, Cramer will tell you that it is all a question of organization, and if you can induce Cramer to talk about it a little he will tell you just how he arrived at that conclusion. Nine years ago he was on the verge of a physical breakdown. One morning the terminal superintendent of that day called the stationmaster up to his office and said: "Cramer, you must go away for a while and get well. Make your arrangements to leave for Chicago at 4 o'clock, and when you get there go to the office and you will find transportation West." Cramer told the superintendent that he couldn't leave just then, whereupon the superintendent expressed in unvarnished terms his opinion of an executive who couldn't trust the organization he himself had built up.

"I thought of about a thousand things in the next two seconds," Cramer says, "and then I made a resolution and told the superintendent that I would go. I was away for six weeks and I found a good many things at loose ends when I got back. But I've never forgotten that interview and I started in then to build up an organization that would carry this place through no matter what became of myself. Now if I want to go away for a month I go and things go on just the same."

Cramer began his railroad career at the age of 16 as a newsboy for the Union News Company on the Pennsylvania Railroad. He subsequently served as passenger brakeman and conductor and has been assistant station master and station master at the Grand Central for seventeen years.

On the Jersey side of the Hudson there are half a dozen railway stations, large and small, most of them largely given up to commutation business. A typical station master of the lines across the river is Henry Byrnes of the Lackawanna Terminal at Hoboken, who says he handles more commuters every day than any other road in the country. "And there isn't a finer class of people in the world than pass through this station every day," Byrnes declares proudly. He not only knows nearly all of the Lackawanna commuters, but he has known the fathers and mothers of most of them and the grandparents of many, for he has been with the Lackawanna since 1885, when he entered the service as a brakeman. He has been in charge of the Hoboken Terminal for ten years and was assistant for several years prior to his appointment as station master.

Miniature Japanese Village in the Famous Rothschild Gardens

WITH linden trees of immense size forming a shaded archway for a distance of three square blocks in circular fashion, in addition to peonies, daffodils and tulips clustering along the edge of a high latticed railing which surrounds the fairyland interior, one is apt to become so enraptured with this place of exquisite perfume and beauty that he completely forgets the world outside. Such is the impression gathered after a stroll around the exterior of the "Rothschild gardens" lying in an exclusive spot just outside Vienna.

The first source of admiration is the home of the owner of these rare gardens, of whom it most certainly may be said he "dwells within enchanted walls." The house is so literally covered with vines and flowers creeping from ground to roof that it is difficult to discover, at first, its material. It is a harmonious mingling of brick and wood and stone. The lower section comprises a first floor located high off the ground, with two stories above, leaving the attic divided into rooms in the various little towers.

The entrance is very artistically planned, being of white stone against the red and brown background of the house. About a dozen steps in circular rotation lead upward to the doorway, which has an arch of white marble overhead supported by straight lined columns, around which vines have wound their way. There is quite a long gravel walk to this abode, with huge artificial plants on either side, and the surrounding lawns are beds of exquisitely laid out flowers of every description.

A little Japanese village is built in midget form in an enclosed low wall. Actual paths are formed in the small grass plots, which are surrounded by trees, gardens and flower beds. Figures of little Japanese maidens are seen going to and from their temple of worship. As their flowered costumes seem real, so do the Oriental colorings of the temple blend in unison, and upon close scrutiny Japanese men may be seen in prayer, bowing before the image they believe in. The familiar two-wheeled chair, drawn by a servant of her own country and so characteristic of the girl of Japan as her sole means of conveyance, is also plainly evident.

Another striking feature of these Viennese gardens is the vegetable section. One might not credit the fact that such insignificant things as eatables could be worthy of note or mention, but by arrangement of colors they are beautiful. The pink carrot has a cluster of green peas as a background, while ears of corn surround leaves of lettuce with the bright red radish as a centre. Some are so arranged as to resemble a bouquet of flowers, and here is where cauliflower, spinach, watercress and beets play their separate parts. The ground fruits are planted with the same idea.

Climax of all this beauty is the central flower garden. (The Rothschild gardens are open to visitors between April and September inclusive.) It seems as if nowhere could so much combined beauty be imagined. Every possible flower is on view and at its best advantage.

Before leaving the gardens three marble statues standing on a small terrace overlooking the southwest expanse of the city call for notice. White marble slabs form benches upon which to rest, and are richly engraved with images and flowers. The benches number about ten, placed rather far apart with large rose bushes back of each one.